

Published by
the Associated
Society of
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ASLEF *Journal*

September 2009

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ASLEF'S GETTING BIGGER!



OVER the last couple of months the union has had applications to join us from over 189 train drivers on the main lines and operators on London Underground. That makes us one of the fastest growing unions in the country. I have to say that I'm delighted, not just because it boosts our numbers but because it puts our specialist union in a better position to improve the pay and conditions of every train driver in the country.

ASLEF represents the vast majority – some 90% – of the UK's train drivers but I won't be content until we work for them all. The higher the proportion of members we have in a company, the more vigorously we can argue on their behalf. Non-members not only sponge off our union, they also weaken it. Every driver who joins another association wastes their money and divides our train driving community.

ASLEF hasn't been so healthy for years. I'm sure that our improved status within the railway industry and our commitment to democracy and transparency are useful. But people are also joining for more personal reasons. They see threats to our jobs and want collective strength, and they enjoy being part of the ASLEF family of specialised independent professional train drivers. Train drivers have a unique skill – and a unique union to match.

I'm really grateful to everyone concerned for efforts they have made in this recruitment effort. There are too many folk to name, but Alan Moir up in Scotland and a host of people in London Underground – like Steve Grant, Dave Feldwick and Alistair Reay – have done sterling work and a special thank you to Eddie Chick of St Pancras.

Making train drivers exclusively ASLEF members also prevents our grades being used by others for their own purposes. More than one union wants our members in order to use our industrial strength for their own purposes and objectives, both industrial and political.

We saw an example of this recently when another rail union was taking action. In these circumstances we always offer our members the same advice: although it is not our dispute we always say we will back to the hilt any driver who feels he cannot cross the picket line of another union. But this, it seems, is not enough for some. They wanted ASLEF to instruct its members to come out on strike as well.

We can't and won't accept this. We make decisions on behalf of our own grades. We cannot afford to be dictated to by people outside. We have a proud tradition of backing other working people but for another union to criticise us for 'refusing to back' its dispute is plain daft. We'd be out on strike for issues utterly remote from us most days of the week.

We're sorry for unions that don't have our industrial influence. But we can't be in the business of fighting their battles for them. It's one of our strongest reasons for staying independent – and happily more and more people are reaching the same conclusion.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

NXEA STRIKES SUSPENDED AS UNION SECURES IMPROVED OFFER

THE union suspended strike action and began a ballot of members in National Express East Anglia (NXEA) following solidly-supported industrial action which took place over three consecutive weeks.

Drivers in the company withdrew their labour on the Thursdays and Fridays of 30/31 July, 6/7 August, and on Thursday 13 August. Further strikes had been earmarked for 14 and 20/21 August, and there was every prospect of a full week's action in September. The company council, along with national officer Andy Morrison and EC member Nigel Gibson, had been unable to make any real progress despite three days of talks facilitated by the conciliation and arbitration service ACAS - which were described as 'increasingly fractious and unhelpful'.

The impasse was broken after early morning face-to-face talks at the union's headquarters between NXEA managing director Andrew Chivers and union general secretary Keith Norman on 13 August. This resulted in changes to the offer which the company council and executive committee agreed were sufficient to put before members with some reasonable expectation that it



Bishops Stortford Picket Line

would be acceptable.

A union statement said, 'We have hammered out an amicable time-table for the resolution of the industrial relations difficulties which have divided us. I also feel that we have secured reasonable pay increases given the general economic climate and the financial position of NXEA.'

The dispute began after ASLEF members employed by NX East Anglia had voted by over 95% to take strike action.



Cambridge Picket Line



Chingford Picket Line



Colchester Picket Line



Gidea Park Depot



Norwich picket line



Southend Picket Line

ASLEF SETS UP HARDSHIP FUND

ONE side-effect of this at times bitter dispute is that the union had decided to begin putting money aside to build up a hardship fund for members taking industrial action. 'These days very few people have spare cash for exceptional circumstances like a lengthy strike,' says Keith Norman. 'The NXEA experience brought home to us that we may need to support colleagues taking industrial action financially in the future.'

'We never want to be in the position where ASLEF members have to return to work because of financial considerations. We have a proud tradition of coming away from industrial disputes with our heads held high.'

'I believe this was the case in the recent dispute. A hardship fund will ensure this continues to be the case in the future.'

Keith added that he regretted the way that, encouraged by the media, large sections of the public decided that in every industrial dispute, the union is always to blame. 'It is a widespread fallacy about industrial action. Yes, a union calls a strike. That doesn't mean we've caused it. But that is a difficult attitude to turn around.'

A GENUINE BOND

Keith, Andy Morrison and the executive council were anxious to stress how solidly the strike had been supported – and to pay tribute to all members who had shown their support. Without it, nothing would have been achieved.

'I never cease to be amazed at the genuine sense of fraternity that exists within our train driving and union fraternity,' says Keith Norman. 'It is a remarkable bond.'

AIR CONDITIONED TUBES 'ONLY A YEAR AWAY'

LONDON UNDERGROUND (LUL) says engineering trials have begun for the first fleet of air conditioned Tube trains.

The 191 new 'S stock' trains – which are longer than existing tubes and could increase capacity by 20% - are currently being tested underground.

The plan is to introduce them onto the Metropolitan Line in September 2010 and then to gradually roll them out onto the Circle, Hammersmith & City and District lines. LUL is also trying to develop ways of installing air conditioning on the network's deep lines, such as the Northern and Victoria.

The London Tube is the oldest underground railway network in the world, having begun its services in 1863. It now runs along 249 miles of track.

■ **KINGS NORTON** in Birmingham has been declared the West Midlands' first 'eco-friendly' station after a team effort to create a bespoke 'green' travel plan for its users.

Transport authority Centro, Network Rail, Birmingham City Council and local bus operators have announced a set of environmentally friendly proposals which will make it easier for passengers to travel to the station by bicycle, bus, on foot or car pooling.

The scheme will feature enhanced walking and cycling routes, secure cycle racks located at the station and improved access for pedestrians.

■ **PLANS TO** construct a new strategic rail freight interchange on a site in St Albans have been rejected by the local council for the second time. The plans by developer HelioSlough included warehousing and parking for cars and lorries on a site of more than 1000 acres. 350 objectors, including representatives of First Capital Connect and ATOC heard the council reject the plans on the proposed development on the grounds that it was too large, stretched over green-belt land and would attract a huge increase in traffic to the area. The council's planning committee rejected the latest plans.

Its reasons included the scale of the project, its Green Belt location and a huge increase in lorry movements which local people were concerned about.

ATOC claimed the proposals would mean an additional 12 trains daily using the new interchange.



■ **MPS ON** the Transport Select Committee have published a damning report in the rail franchise system, calling it a mess and claiming that it is too easy for TOCs to 'abandon their obligations' during tough times.

The committee criticized unacceptable fare increases, at a time when inflation is close to zero, reduced services and staff redundancies.

Following the decision by National Express to default on the East Coast mainline, committee chair Louise Ellman (above) said: 'Many more franchises may be struggling to meet their financial obligations, without our knowledge.'

'More failures in the franchise system will cost a lot of public money and we are deeply concerned about the impact this could have on the funding for other transport projects.'

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ASLEF CELEBRATES TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS

DAVE JOHNSON of the union's **Waterloo & Nine Elms branch** explains why ASLEF members from all over the country travelled to the tiny Dorset village of Tolpuddle last month to celebrate trade unionism.

On February 24th, 1834, six farm labourers from Tolpuddle were convicted of taking part in an 'illegal oath' ceremony. The real offence was that they had dared to form a trade union to defend their livelihood. For this they were transported to the penal colonies of Australia for seven years. The sentences provoked outrage which led to the first great mass trade union protest. The campaign won the men free pardons and the Martyrs' return to England.

To celebrate this historic episode in the struggle for trade unionists' rights in Great Britain, members of Waterloo & Nine Elms branch met up with Woking branch members and 'coached' it down to Dorchester (Thanks to Woking LDC Michael Berg who drove the coach). Weymouth branch had already arrived, along with Brighton, Bristol and Stratford branches, so ASLEF was well represented. There was music from Billy Bragg and others, together with moving speeches from some of those present.

It was nice to see a banner commemo-

rating Jack Jones whose death earlier this year, aged 95, was a sad loss to the trade union movement. In a celebration of trade unionism ASLEF was represented by EC member Marz Colombini, District Organiser Graham Morris and National Organiser Simon Weller, who arrived despite breaking down en-route! Company Council was represented by Shaun Seymour. The first showing of District 1's banner was observed, which led the Branch banners in the procession, before members enjoyed the hospitality on offer. All members present had a great day out in the Dorset countryside with many planning to return next year with their families for a longer visit.

● Photos: Shaun Seymour



Union welcome for line electrification

KEITH NORMAN hailed the announcement by the government in July of its intention to electrify more of the UK rail network as a 'major step forward for both passengers and staff'.

'Electrification helps us meet environmental targets, it's going to make a profit in the future, it will provide quicker journeys, it provides improved working conditions for drivers and it stops us being the poor boys of Europe. Currently Macedonia has a higher percentage of its track electrified than the UK,' he said. 'We have just 32.9%.'

The Prime Minister announced a £1.1 billion rail electrification programme before traveling to a Cabinet meeting on one of the lines earmarked for electrification - the Great Western line from London to Swansea. Also included in the plan is the electrification of Liverpool to Manchester. No decision has been made on the Midland Main Line, which is 'under consideration'.

One other useful assurance from Gordon Brown was that, because the investment will pay for itself over the coming 40 years, with significant cuts in fuel, operating and maintenance costs for example, 'there will be no impact on fares'. He said, 'We have set aside money for this. It's an important priority for us.'

Work on London-Swansea will take eight years, which Keith says 'demonstrates the need for long-term planning for rail' even as it 'shows the shortcomings of the short-term franchise system'.

The initiative should also be of assistance to the UK's recession-hit economy and could have other benefits as rolling stock will also need to be updated.

ATOC RAIL STAFF TRAVEL FACILITIES SURVEY

ALMOST a year after conducting a survey into rail staff travel facilities ATOC has presented its findings to ASLEF.

Unsurprisingly 'safeguarded' TOC staff who previously worked for British Rail prior to privatisation, and who make up 9.5 per cent of TOC employees expressed higher satisfaction with the amount of free travel they receive than non-safeguarded staff. Among this group, consisting of the 11 per cent of employees who joined the industry since privatisation, respondents were likely to use their free travel facilities fewer than 20 times a year.

Safeguarded non-TOC staff, which includes Network rail employees were more inclined to use their free travel more selectively in order to conserve their free entitlement.

Similarly, safeguarded staff rarely purchased tickets available to the general public despite the fact that advance purchase tickets sometimes represented better value for money. This was because they have the option of using a free 'travel box' when taking a longer journey.

However a third of non-safeguarded facility holders who have no free travel entitlement have purchased tickets available to the general public.

Nearly 90 per cent of non-safeguarded staff indicated that they would travel by rail more frequently if they were allowed to buy a wider range of tickets using their discount entitlements. In fact this sector believed they would make an additional six or more journeys for leisure per year.

This same group of employees cited a variety of other reasons why they did not avail themselves of their discount facilities more often. These reasons included the pricing of publicly available tickets, which were often cheaper than those available at a 'priv' rate and the fact that partner entitlements were not available.

Among those who travel to work by train, the highest proportion of privilege Season ticket holders were among TOC safeguarded staff, 65 per cent, a figure that decreases to 55 per cent among non-TOC safeguarded, although this lower take up rate might be explained by the fact the non-TOC staff are less likely to work in the immediate vicinity of rail stations. The most popular alternative to journeying by rail was to take the car.

All staff were asked if their own TOC or group facilities were more, or less useful than their national entitlements. Unsurprisingly, safeguarded staff expressed a higher degree of satisfaction with their national facilities, while non-safeguarded staff tended to prefer their local TOC facilities.

Finally staff were asked what other travel facilities they would like to be made available to them. The answers collated were wide-ranging and included the ability to purchase First Class tickets, or a more generous means of upgrading to First Class. A surprising number of respondents also expressed the wish to be able to travel at discount in Europe. The fact that this is already possible through the FIP scheme (after one year's service for non-safeguarded staff) suggests that some needs may be met by improved communication.

A total of 1000 surveys were mailed in equal numbers to groups representing 'safeguarded' and non-'safeguarded' TOC employees, safeguarded non-TOC employees and retired 'safeguarded' staff. The response rate was 40 per cent.



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CAMPAIGNING FOR ALL WORKERS' RIGHTS

KEITH NORMAN is correct in his view that if MPs were more approachable and visible in their own constituencies, the electorate would be less inclined to vote for a fascist party in order to register a protest. However, it would be complacent of us to believe that the rising popularity of the BNP is due to the low profile kept by some MPs and the scandal of politicians' expenses.

After 18 years of a Tory government, which made it a crusade to confiscate workers' rights and their right to defend those rights and 12 years of a New Labour government more interested in representing the middle class, (not to be confused with those working class people who aspire to be middle class and who judge their social status on income alone) the working classes of this country have not been given a voice by the mainstream parties. Another reason for the BNP's success is that right wing newspapers have added an almost hysterical tone to their reporting. One such newspaper recently reported that last year 100,000 immigrants came to the UK, but omitted to mention the fact that 70,000 had left. A total increase of 30,000 in a country with a falling birth rate and an ageing population. Articles like these suggest Britain is facing a hostile takeover akin to an invasion.

A fascist party uses racism as a tool to divide the working class, an example of this could be seen at the recent Lindsey Oil dispute. The BNP appeared to be standing up for workers' rights by jumping on the bandwagon and demanding 'British jobs for British workers'. The issue here was not British jobs being stolen by overseas workers, it was trade unionists being undermined by scab labour. If the BNP were ever to take office, there would be no workers' rights for there would be no trade unions. The active members of our branch realise that ASLEF is a democratic socialist organisation that is part of a wider movement. We will continue to campaign for all workers' rights and against fascism.

It was with this in mind that the EC member for District 1, Marz Colombini, Charley Martin and myself attended this year's International Brigade memorial Service. Once again we displayed the Waterloo and Nine Elms banner and Marz laid a wreath in memory of the brave brigade volunteers.

In July 1936 a military uprising was launched in Spain by a group of fascist generals whose aim was to overthrow the



Jack Jones, working class hero



Trade unionists can help stop the BNP

newly elected Republican government. Faced with determined opposition, the rebels turned to fascist Italy and Nazi Germany for assistance. The decision of western governments not to intervene spurred many to take on the fight for freedom themselves. Over 2,300 men and women left their homes in Britain and Ireland to fight with the International Brigades in Spain, 526 never returned. For the brigade's fighters (who were from predominantly working class backgrounds and trade unions) the war was seen within the wider context of the struggle for democracy against international fascism, which began with Mussolini, gained terrible momentum with Hitler and was carried forward by Franco.

This year the International Brigade Memorial Trust mourned the passing of that great union man and former pensioners' leader Jack Jones. Jack, himself a brigade fighter who was wounded at the battle of the Ebro in 1938 was president of the trust. A real working class hero, he will be sorely missed by all!

Steve Richardson Vice Chair Waterloo and Nine Elms branch.



NO MESSIN'

Last year more than 9000 incidents of trespass on the railways were reported. The vast majority of these were committed by young people and many of those took place during the extended school holidays.

Chief Inspector Paul Richards, British Transport Police South West sector commander says 'route crime is a major issue, and sadly it is often children who engage in this activity, usually in the form of trespass'.

The effects can be devastating. Not only do these sorts of crimes cause massive financial damage but all too often results in serious injury or even death to kids playing 'chicken' on the tracks. The resulting damage to a driver's health, and his or her career can also not be underestimated.

In South Wales more than 40 such incidents were reported in the first two weeks of the Summer holiday alone, with one involving a youth who broke both legs while trying to surf a train. A practice than involves clinging to the outside of a moving train.

To raise awareness of the dangers of playing on railway lines a film produced by the 'No Messin' team is being shown at events across the UK. The campaign is fronted by boxer Amir Khan.

Anne Marie Baston, Community Safety Manager at Network Rail, who presents the film, says; 'It is madness for young people to play on any railway line, but owing to the fact that the high speed trains are bigger, faster and quieter we have developed this film to highlight some of the specific dangers associated with trains. We hope that by getting these messages across we can help prevent a needless tragedy'.

A poster campaign featuring coffin-shaped railway sleepers with RIP messages describing how trespassers met their fate was launched at major stations to coincide with the start of the summer break. Last year there were over 9000 reported incidents of trespass. These did not just involve children. Other casualties included dog walkers, passengers attempting to retrieve lost mobile phones, and commuters simply using the track as a short cut to change platforms.

MAKING A UNION THAT WORKS FOR YOU

A report from PHILIP DEVONPORT of our Marylebone Branch

At this year's Annual Assembly of Delegates (AAD) the Executive Committee proposed a review of how the union operates and functions. The conference agreed to involve 26 representatives from across the country in a series of practical workshops. The first took place at Arkwright Road in July.

After a brief address by the General Secretary we divided into subject groups, each of which considered a topic and gave a report back. These are some of the ideas that were aired.

BRANCHES

- One size does not fit all, and because some larger branches include members from eight different companies, it makes it difficult for them to function effectively.
- There was a discussion about holding joint meetings of different branches on company lines. This had been tried successfully in some areas.
- We need to offer members education to enable them to understand their branch and its functions.

DISTRICT COUNCILS

- It was felt that the current two meetings a year wasn't working, and this could be increased to four.
- If this happened, the DC role could be expanded to assist in education and recruitment. Other participants felt that if the role and scope of the District Councils was not improved they could be done away with entirely.

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES

- A rotation system to allow each Branch to attend conference was considered.
- It was felt the union should offer AAD training to delegates.
- Branches could be encouraged to send potential delegates as visitors.
- We considered whether branches that failed to submit financial returns should be allowed to put forward agenda items.

We also felt that we needed to explain to members the role and function of the Executive Committee and the Appeals Committee.

GENERAL SECRETARY AND OFFICERS

It was noted that there are no rules about deputising for the General Secretary, and suggested that there should be elections for GS every five years without exception. It was also noted that District Organisers could be lead negotiators without having been elected by members in that company. They could also be encouraged to organise Weekend Schools to help in training members and new reps.

We felt that too much paper work is sent from Head Office, which could make better use of alternative methods like email and text messages.

The 26 ASLEF members from all levels of the union made this a positive day's debate and provided a lot of ideas for the Executive Committee to consider. A further workshop is planned for later in the year and conclusions will be put out to branches to debate.



ASLEF delegates listen to the debates



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1984: PAST VISION - OR TIMELY WARNING?

ASLEF London activist **Andy Viner** re-read '1984' recently and found it both provoking and enjoyable. Here he explains why he thinks that exactly 60 years after its publication, it's still a book that matters ...

It is 60 years since George Orwell's last book, the political classic '1984' was published. The author – whose real name was Eric Arthur Blair – died the following year, 1950. His final book was a fictional piece of writing based on a totalitarian one-party state, widely believed to be a caricature of Stalinist Russia, but the subjects it deals with have far outlived the Soviet Union. Its cultural impact is still felt today with programmes on TV like 'Big Brother' and 'Room 101' and terms of political abuse like 'newspeak' and 'doublethink'.

The book is easy to read and very descriptive, even though it brings in new and different terminology concepts which have become part of our modern language (like 'War is Peace' and 'He who controls

the past controls the future'). Its outlook on mankind is deeply pessimistic with its picture of repressive governments and conforming citizens, but it also highlights that individuals will always resist in their own ways.

TRUTH OR LIES

The book centres around a character called Winston Smith who works in the Ministry of Truth (which concerns itself with lies). His job is to rewrite history, changing stories and deleting references to people who are out of favour with the government. Life is drab, everything is in short supply – even though every year the government produces reports 'proving' that everything is wonderful.

From morning to dusk everybody is monitored – 'You had to live in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and every movement scrutinized'. The Thought Police ensure no independent thought or expression is allowed. People disappear, children are encouraged to inform on their parents – and there is always war, because an enemy diverts anger. 'Big Brother is Watching You' is plastered everywhere.

Yet for all the repression, individuals go to great lengths to be free for a small time,

despite the dangers. The book develops the idea that some will be satisfied with a small hint of freedom, while others see the need to organise against repression.

CONTROL OF THE MESSAGE

The concepts raised in the book include 'double speak', where the Ministry of Peace is the war department and the Ministry of Love is concerned with torture. We can hear echoes of this with our modern politicians, where 'reform and efficiency' means 'cuts' and 'in the country's best interests' often means 'to the benefit of the rulers'. We saw these double standards with the recent scandal over MP's expenses. It was argued that politicians were not at fault because they bent rather than broke the rules – while we know single parents trying to make ends meet would find themselves in jail for something similar.

Even today, people point to Orwell's book when there are concerns about increasing surveillance, CCTVs, Identity Cards, 42-day detention or other infringements of civil liberties. In the UK today the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 grants 800 agencies the power to conduct

surveillance and access communication records. The UK has more CCTV cameras than any other country. The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust recently concluded that 8 out of 10 national databases present serious dangers to privacy, recommending they be deleted or reorganised. There are fears of ID cards or compulsory DNA tests that could store endless information on individuals.

SCREENS IN OUR HOMES

To many, the world's media today operates on the basis of 'newspeak' – telling us what we think we want to know. The news does not offer objective facts, it presents incidents designed to form our opinions. Our screens inundate us with soaps and 'celebrity' gossip to trivialise the world, distracting us from important issues. We're encouraged towards apathy, leaving politics to professional politicians who 'know best'.

The opposing argument is that 'If you've done nothing wrong, you've nothing to fear.' That may be true from a criminal point of view, but it's a different situation if you want to use your democratic right to protest over government policy. For example, an anti-arms trade campaigner recently won a landmark victory against the Metropolitan Police who had illegally placed him under surveillance following a 2005 protest.

It was also disclosed recently that an organisation was compiling lists of 'trouble-makers' in the building industry and selling it to employers to use as a 'black list'. The crime of the people on it was to use their legal right to organise, fighting for wages, conditions and safety on building sites.

States use national security to limit freedoms, collect information and defend their own privileges – often to the cost of trade unionists across the globe. In the UK today we are fortunate in not being oppressed, but we need to be on our guard and ready to defend our freedoms. The key is to understand the nature of the state, and to ask whose interests it serves.

That is why, 60 years on, George Orwell's vision remains an important book as well as a riveting read. It lets us reassess how eerily close we can find ourselves to '1984'.

EDUCATION: A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO 'THE BOOKIES'!

Many of us retain such bad memories of our school-days that the thought of education alarms rather than inspires! It's like doing a ten-year prison stretch and then being invited back for an encore.

The problem stems from equating 'education' and 'school'. School may not have been much fun, but education can be. Apart from the innate pleasure of learning something new, a little knowledge can add to our personal confidence and enjoyment of life. It can also be a useful tool to other pastimes, hobbies and even employment.

That's why we are taking it so seriously, and why I have asked District Organiser Kevin Lindsay to oversee the whole learning project.

A new skill or interest is never a burden to carry around, and I'm delighted that we've found so many enthusiastic and competent learning reps in ASLEF. Make use of them – and do yourself a favour!

It gives a new meaning to the phrase 'the bookies' ...!

Keith Norman - General Secretary



Julie Freston and Angie Butler breathe a sigh of relief as the Birmingham centre opens its doors

CONFERENCE OUTLINES OPPORTUNITIES

A report from Mark Reynolds who is a Union Learning Representative (URL) at Lincoln

I ATTENDED this year's encouraging Proud to Educate annual conference in Eastbourne. It was a well attended event and included learning representatives (URLs) from all over the country.

One useful feature was discovering how the various learning agreements are working within the different companies. The degree of success varies from one company to another. While some companies have been prepared to embrace the life long learning agenda, others have been slower on the up-take.

This is a problem for our members who may want to take part in some form of education - whether it's for personal development or just to learn a new skill. As a joint venture between the unions and the management, we still have a lot of work to do.

MORE WORK THAN SHOP!

At the workshop they led, Nextstep explained that they are a government-funded organisation charged with giving advice on learning and education, career options and job search techniques. The Unionlearn workshop talked about their role

aimed at supporting ULRs across the country in our efforts to deliver learning opportunities for our membership. We discussed the various ways this could be achieved - including talking to managers, securing direct funding or even following up offers of reduced price courses from colleges and universities.

The presentation from BBC Raw gave an insight into their interactive website featuring courses as varied as how to manage money effectively, coping with the loss of a loved one or how to deal with sales people in

an effective manner.

I am very new in the role of a ULR but I found it an interesting and informative day. I would like to thank Julie Freeston and everyone else who was involved in organising the event. I'd also like to record my gratitude to Sarah Laurie and Chris Nutty for all their help in recent times - and for putting up with my somewhat naïve questions!

The message I'd like to spread after the conference is this: no matter what company you work for, if you would like to take on something for your own personal development, improve your chances of securing another position within the railway industry or perhaps to help others - then please contact your local Union Learning Representative.

It's not all about Maths and English - so come and see for yourselves!

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

■ ASLEF's 'Proud to Educate' annual conference this year was

held at the end of March at the Eastbourne Centre.

■ Thirty-one Union Learning Reps (URL) and Company Council reps attended, along with General Secretary Keith Norman, Executive Committee President Alan Donnelly, District Organiser Kevin Lindsay and Executive Committee member Nigel Gibson.

■ External speakers included Adrian Ryan from Unionlearn, Kevin Pearce from Next Step and Elly Hargreave from BBC Raw.

■ The event was aimed at giving ASLEF Union Learning Representatives the opportunity to be briefed on how the union sees the ASLEF learning project developing and to encourage them to give their views by participating in various workshops. Not surprisingly, the main focus points were organising, learning and the current economic downturn.

■ Feedback was very positive from the delegates and the general conclusion was that it had been a successful conference.



The fine selection of ASLEF's learning reps who attended the 2009 annual conference

ASLEF USES ADULT WORKERS W

The union played its part in the nation-wide multi-union Adult Learners' Week which (we hope you noticed!) to Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest and longest running learning campaign and it aims to encourage adults of their age and background, to give learning a go. Here we feature six areas where ASLEF raised the learning s

FRATTON ALW

During Adult Learners Week the South West Trains union learning representatives Sandra Gallacher, Ian Jolly and Alan Martin (from Island Line) organised an event called 'Learning a little - live a lot' at The Fratton Railway Club.

The day was a celebration of Adult Learning which aimed to introduce members to their local ULRs.

Southampton and Portsmouth Colleges supported the day and provided access to information on courses available in the area and offered support where needed. The local Unionlearn team from the U-net centre at Southampton also helped to provide a well rounded experience.

Colleagues were able to have expert one-to-one tuition on financial capabilities (managing your money) provided by The BBC, as part of the corporation's 'raw money' initiative. Their website is fantastic with a wealth



Getting into the swing with ASLEF!

of information made fun. Well worth a look www.bbc.co.uk/raw

The day finished with some professional dance instruction - a jive routine to 'The Boy Does Nothing'! A good time was had by

all, thanks to the efforts of all the providers and ULRs who supported the day.

Emma Ramsay - ASLEF Project Worker - Southwest Region.



No shorts

SWINDON

Our celebration and events on 3 June at Swindon's V Business Centre introduced First Great Western rail workers to the many different resources available to access education - which can mean trying something new and even having a bit of fun.

The event was split between four rooms....

- Marketplace: where local colleges (Unionlearn, Swindon College and The New College, Swindon) had stalls and were available to disseminate information on courses.

- BBC Raw: financial capability workshops run by a BBC expert, exploring the BBC 'Raw Money' website and gaining knowledge on

IPSWICH

I'd like to thank everyone at ASLEF for the help we were given to arrange five events during Adult Learners Week - at Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge, Colchester and Liverpool Street Stations.

Various taster sessions took place from Spanish, Indian Head Massage, Self Defence to Scuba Diving. A number of Skills for Life assessments were carried out and these will now be progressed. Although we struggled to get people along at some locations, the whole week was a great success and well worth the effort.

Without help and funding from Unionlearn these events would never have taken place and union members seeking to take up further education would have sadly missed this opportunity. Many thanks to all the project workers and especially to Lisa Bowler from City College Norwich for her help in arranging the taster sessions.

Trevor Southgate - Lead Union Learning Representative - Ipswich

BIRMINGHAM CENTRE OPEN AT LAST!

The Learning Centre at Birmingham New Street Station finally opened its doors in April. The project has been created with funding and expertise from Advantage West Midlands, and managed through Unionlearn West Midlands. ASLEF's Proud to Educate Project Worker Julie Freeston secured the funding to equip the centre, whilst London Midland provided the room, furniture and various other levels of support and equipment.

The new centre is based on the

dispersal bridge at New Street station to allow London Midland staff to fit learning around their shifts. It boasts ten workstations, an electronic whiteboard and a modern projector. From a core of IT skills, literacy and numeracy it is hoped to branch out to offer tuition in languages and an ITQ.

London Midland managing director Stephen Banaghan says he knows how difficult it can be to fit learning around shift working, adding, 'The Learning Centre is flex-

ible and in an ideal location to help our workforce acquire new skills.'

Gerard Coyne, a Unite official who is the union representative on the Advantage West Midlands Board agrees that, 'The key is that employers and employees prefer facilities to be as close as possible to their workplace in order to provide them with the flexibility they need to fit learning in with their busy schedules.'

ASLEF's Project Worker Julie Freeston said, 'We are delighted with the Learning Centre and the strong partnerships that have been built with all those involved. This is a vital resource for ULRs within London Midland, enabling them to offer more learning and training opportunities to employees and the employer.'

My thanks go out to all who helped to get this project running, especially fantastic Julie Freeston, supportive and enthusiastic Aaron Clapp and brilliant Cheryl Sutcliffe from LM!

Angie Butler - Lead Union Learning Rep - Birmingham New Street

- For more information about the facilities and learning opportunities in the centre contact ASLEF Union Learning Representative Angie Butler on 07818 087206, Aaron Clapp on 07595 838730 or email newstlearning@aol.com



London Midland managing director Stephen Banaghan and Unionlearn's regional secretary Roger McKenzie officially opened the Centre. Here they are seen with ASLEF's Angie Butler

WEEK TO TEMPT NEW LEARNERS

ook place in May.
ults, whatever
standard



age of ideas and information at the Marketplace

managing your money.

- Interactive: wii Brain Academy and wii Fit offered the chance to test skills and fitness – and to have some fun by breaking down the barriers that fear of technology can bring

- Comfort zone: reflexology taster sessions, demonstrating that being out of your comfort zone and trying something new can be both enjoyable and beneficial.

We have for some time been trying to set up a learning agreement with First Great Western but everything was put on hold while the restructuring took place. Hopefully this event will help to kick-start the events as we were able to explain what we're trying to



Don't know what's going on? Well find out! Ask your ULR!

achieve to several key players and senior managers who attended. Watch this space....!

Many thanks to all our partners and to TUC/Unionlearn for sponsoring the event.

Emma Ramsay – ASLEF Project Worker – Southwest Region

WOKING



Proving the point that there's plenty of help at hand

Over 50 members of staff and their families attended our Learn at Work Day at Woking depot in May – and hopefully a good few of them went away thinking about starting a course in the near future.

Brooklands College, Guildford College and the Open University provided visitors with a wealth of information on adult courses – many of which are flexible to suit

shift workers.

Surrey Libraries and Surrey History Centre offered a wide range of mainly free resources for researching family trees, starting reading groups and learning how to use the internet. Many people took up free membership on the day.

As an alternative form of education, a Trager specialist and a Body Talk practitioner gave practical advice and tutorials on repetitive strain injuries plus a 5 minute work out to avoid all sorts of back and shoulder pain.

Finally the BBC were in attendance promoting their excellent new RAW website which gives advice and support on a huge range of financial skills such as banking, savings, debts and mortgages. Throw in a few quizzes with prizes and a splendid buffet and it was a good day all in all – and something to build upon for next year.

Martin Scott – Union Learning Representative – Woking

EARLS COURT

On the 14 May I organised 'taster sessions' and provided information on a variety of subjects for our depot's Learner Day. With the help of ASLEF's Proud to Educate Project Co-ordinator Julie Freeston, I secured funding for the event from the South Eastern Region TUC learning fund.

My local managers agreed to hold the event in the undercroft which meant we had space for massages and computer sessions – as well as having room for people to use the two computers that were available for online course registration. A selection of promotional merchandise and Quick Read books were available along with information about Sign Language and Ezzone. .

Using the four Unionlearn computers we'd borrowed, we offered taster sessions on the computer course we hope to run at Earls Court in August/September.

The day started slowly as a few people trickled along to see what we were up to, and the DMT Ade Fetuga helped out by reminding people booked on where we were.

In all we had about 60 visitors with about two-thirds either registering for online courses, massages, computer sessions or for courses near their own homes. The Quick Read books proved to be very popular and I even managed to get a driver from Upminster signed up to an online language course.

All in all, the day went really well and people have said they hope it will happen again next year. Thanks to everyone who worked to make it a success.

Tracey Figg – Union Learning Representative – Earls Court

WILLESDEN



There's the rub – it's massage time at Willesden!

Things went quiet on the learning front after London Overground took over the franchise from Silverlink Metro for various reasons – including one active ULR leaving to join London Midland and changes in the management of the learning agenda. Emma Ramsay and I decided that an Open Day in Learning Week was a chance for us to remedy this.

Previous surveys from the Silverlink era suggested there was interest in learning languages. This led us to the theme of European languages with continental food as a main attraction! We chose Willesden – the main interchange of the Overground network – as the ideal location to bring in visitors.

Language tutors from Birkbeck College advised us taster sessions would be difficult to organise with people dropping in and out as their breaks allowed. Instead we opted for an informal arrangement with a simple quiz sheet, grabbing attention with display boards and a projector.

The smell of freshly baked baguettes and Italian coffee lured people in – and we supplemented these attractions with a selection of cured meats, assiettes de crudités and cheeses from six different countries! A masseuse demonstrating head and neck massage helped provide variety to the day.

Something must have worked – because over 40 people added their names to the attendance record and a few more left without signing. Others expressed an interest in becoming Learning Reps.

The strong response to the offer of languages was not just concerned with making more of holidays. People are also aware of the part London Overground will play in transporting visitors to and from Olympic venues in three years' time. Thanks to Birkbeck College, TSSA and the TUC for their support on the day and to LOROL for providing the venue – not to mention the train crew whose quiet room we borrowed for the day.

Steve Cadwell – Union Learning Representative – Willesden

HOW ZOI GOT HER 'TICKET TO LEARN'!



Zoi has stepped off the footplate and into a new role as a Union Learning Rep – here she is telling government minister David Lammy how learning works

KEY WORKER: THE UNION LEARNING REP



Zoi won the Learning through the Unions Award earlier this year

WHEN Brighton train driver Zoi Kakouris became an ASLEF union learning rep (URL) seven years ago she'd already been an active member of the union's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) consultative committee.

"I decided to become a ULR because I've always liked helping people and working on the LGBT side of things meant I'd already been involved in a bit of education of small-minded people!" she laughs.

Her own schooling had hardly been the happiest days of her life. One day while she was still in the infants she was locked in the teacher's cupboard for refusing to read in front of the rest of the class. Life didn't improve at secondary school. She was bullied by fellow-pupils and did so little during her CSEs that the school forced her to take the English exam twice - because she didn't even put her name on the paper first time around.

"I had no motivation, there was no one at school you could talk to, and I didn't get a lot of support from home," she recalls.

The next time she had to take a test was the guard's exam when she started working on the railways: although she failed first time,

she didn't give up, passing at the second attempt despite all her difficulties with studying from books. When she went on to take the driver's exam, she adopted a new learning strategy: she got a good friend at work to fire questions at her until the answers stuck - and passed first time.

PASSPORT TO HAND

After becoming the lead ULR on Southern Railways in September 2005 (for which she got two days' paid release to carry out her duties), Zoi was seconded full-time to the 'Passport To Learning' project between the company and the three rail unions in July 2007.

When she's not in her office in Lewes, setting up courses, looking for funding or writing reports, she's in one of the project's learning centres in Brighton and Croydon (a third opened in Victoria during Adult Learners' Week), catching up with learners throughout the network, meeting providers, attending steering committee

meetings or even talking to government ministers.

What's made all the difference is training as a ULR, and following that up with Skills for Life and advice and guidance courses (she's just got her IAG Level 4)

"I think I've always had a lack of confidence with learning - I didn't think I could do it - but in the last few years I've been doing all sorts of courses," she explains.

PASSING ALL DOWN THE LINE!

She's most recently passed her National Test for Adult Literacy Level 2 and completed her Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) course which qualifies her to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

"It was hard going. It felt like I was on the computer all day and all night, but I thought, 'If I'm going to do it, I want to get the top grade.' I worked really hard and when I got my confirmation letter a couple of weeks

ago, they'd given me an A grade, so I'm really pleased," she says.

To cap it all, Zoi won the Learning through the Unions Award (sponsored by Unionlearn SERTUC) at the Adult Learners' Week South-East Awards in May.

"We are extremely proud of her and the work that she does for us," said ASLEF Project Worker Declan MacIntyre, who nominated her for the award. "She's a beacon of hope who has earned the respect of all who know and work with her."

Perhaps still just as reluctant to occupy the spotlight as she was at primary school, Zoi can't quite decide how she feels about the recognition.

"It's quite funny really: I was kind of pleased and excited but I'm one of those people who gets embarrassed if someone compliments me," she says.

And what's the best thing about being a ULR? "There's a lot of satisfaction in helping my co-workers," she says. "It really pleases me when people tell me they've passed their course, or got promotion, or are happier in themselves - that's something that makes a difference, not just to them and their career but to their whole life and to their families as well."

And she hasn't finished with her own development, either. She's now looking into an IT teaching qualification, and after recently setting up a Makaton sign language course is now thinking about that as well.

"I just want to teach everyone everything!" she says. "I didn't have a great experience at school and there's thousands of people out there who had worse than I had, but after the way I've developed over the past couple of years, I just want to encourage as many people as I can: there is something everyone can do - if you can get the motivation and a bit of courage."

Zoi is only one of a small army of ASLEF Union Learning Rep out there who want to help members improve their working and home lives as well as opening up opportunities for a better working environment and prospects.

• If you are interested in finding out what skill you can learn or improve on, contact one of the ASLEF Proud to Educate Project Workers or your local ASLEF Learning Rep.

UNION INVOLVED IN HAZARDS

- a report from ALAN MOSS, the National Secretary of the ASLEF / Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee

I HAD the privilege of representing the union at the annual Hazards Conference at Manchester University in July, and can safely say that it is second to none in providing knowledge and confidence for safety representatives.

We spent the eve-of-conference Friday registering, finding out locations for the following day's events and talking over issues with fellow safety reps. I also met people from the various campaign groups who had stands at the event. These included the extremely hard working delegation from FACK (Families Against Corporate Killing), JFC (Justice For Columbia), and of course the Hazards campaign which is a shining light in the health and safety field.

WORKSHOPS AND DEBATES

The main events took place on Saturday with busy ASLEF delegates each attending two workshops and a campaigning debate. The 27 workshops on offer included sessions on bullying and harassment, disability, stress, shift work and health. I attended workshops on 'Health and Safety and the European Union' and 'Risk Assessment'. The debates were formulated so they could form part of an action plan and I chose the topical 'Health & Safety in a Recession Economy'. Safety Representatives need to ensure that employers don't seek to make savings at the cost of those we represent.

Campaign meetings continued on Sunday before the main points were presented to a final session to establish what will be progressed by the Hazards Campaign. I contributed to a productive and rewarding session on campaigning for more safety representatives, stressing that employers as well as reps need to be aware of our rights - and the legal penalties for denying them.



ASLEF reps at the Hazards conference: (L-R) Dave Gunningham (Waterloo) Derek Lowrie (Yoker) Martin Greig (Nesden) and Dave Bennett (Head Office)



Our reporter Alan Moss is on the left of this group - in a manner of speaking!

£27 BILLION OVERTIME UNCLAIMED

Martin Greig attended the Sickness Absence workshop where he heard the CBI claim that £13.7 billion was lost last year through sickness. However they didn't report that £27 billion was saved by unpaid/unclaimed overtime payments. Bullying is estimated to cause 18 million days lost annually, and rogue employers can sometimes see it as a useful tool. In our industry 'unobtrusive monitoring' and 'mystery customers' are used for control purposes.

I would like to ask ASLEF branches to consider financially supporting the Hazards Campaign, which does some outstanding work and finally to thank John Bamford and Hilda Palmer from Hazards, Kevin Lindsay my full-time officer, Colin Smith my district organiser and Longsight Branch for their continued support and encouragement.



On the march with our reporter Neil on the left of our picture

USEFUL DAYS AT TUC'S LGBT CONFERENCE

The tenth annual TUC LGBT conference started on 2 July with Bev Miller introducing us to Sheila Bearcroft, TUC President and Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary, both of whom addressed the conference.

Sheila talked about the struggles that trade unions could face if there were a change of government, wished our conference well and hoped that we would make a difference to the working lives of all members - not just LGBT members.

Brendan Barber then gave us an uplifting speech about how the TUC was proud to be associated with the LGBT conference. He listed some of the achievements it had made over the last decade including work on pensions issues, the Civil Partnership Bill, the Gender Recognition Act and the continuing work on the single Equality Bill.

However he warned of the dangers lying ahead, including violent hate crimes and the feared changes in the political landscape with the rise of the BNP and other far right ideologies.

Maria Exall, Chair of the TUC LGBT Committee, stressed the need for unity as we tackle homophobia in schools and workplaces and reported on the success of the motion on Joel Edwards that was taken forward from LGBT conference to last year's TUC Congress.

Susan Greenwood, ASLEF's LGBT Committee Secretary, was elected to the TUC LGBT Committee for her fourth term.

AGAINST RACISM AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

We debated motions on the single Equality Act, equality reps, equality rights, faith and homophobia, Civil Partnerships, LGBT workers' dignity at work during a recession, sexual orientation monitoring, hate crimes, homophobia in sport and guarding against homophobia in the media.

It was decided to take to the 2009 TUC a motion called 'Against Racism Against Homophobia', calling on us all step up the fight against the BNP after its gains in recent elections.

Other speakers included Angela Eagle MP, DCI Gerry Campbell from the Met Police, Lesley Burton from the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) and Deborah Gold from GALOP.

The LGBT TUC conference is always held two days before London Pride so we work hard - and then get to enjoy the parade on Oxford Street and the stage at Trafalgar Square.

NEIL ADAMS - District 7 LGBT Committee Member



inside the conference hall

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Keeping Track

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

A CENTURY ago the ASLEF Loco Journal carried a provocative piece on socialism versus Christianity, while 50 years back the incomparable Toram Beg recommended trade unionism for a happy and fulfilling life

100 YEARS AGO

Can socialists be Christians? Can Christians be socialists? And which is it better to be? Over to 'La Lumiere', writing on the 'correspondence' page of our September 1909 issue "Sir

...to reply to "C.H.W.". I ask this simply in the interests of truth, for a more blundering and untruthful jumble of vicious phrases it would be hard to find. In the first place, then, Socialism is not Christianity. Neither is Christianity Socialism. Nor can it ever be. There are Christians who are Socialists, and they are Christians not because of Socialism, but in spite of it; and whenever really devout Christian men have joined the ranks of Socialism, the ultimate result has always been, not the uplifting of Socialism, but the degradation of Christianity. Years of experience, a good pair of optics and a great deal of painful thought have taught me that lesson. Socialism lacks the one great essential, viz., spirituality. It has not even a spark of it. The thing is absolutely dead. Its potentialities do not make for unity and peace, but the very opposite. However, whenever or wherever it has been tried it has ignominiously failed, and for the above reason. Its cementing process is feeble and unendurable. It will not stand the stress of man's physical, moral and spiritual needs in this world's life, to say nothing of the next. It has deified the materialistic idea of life and scoffed at the spiritual. It appeals to man's baser passions. It is the "cult" of glorified grab. It says, "What is yours is mine." "Christianity says, "What is mine is yours".

50 YEARS AGO

'What is retirement?' Toram Beg asked in the 'Scottish Opinion' column of the September 1959 Journal. 'The gateway to freedom,' he concluded – so long as you've been a good union member!

"Nowadays, a normally healthy man has a lot of life left to him after he is 65. Surely there is plenty for him to do except haunt the old precincts in the hope of getting a crony to exchange their interminable yarns of exploits in the hoary past. Surely it should occur to them that never before have they had the freedom they now possess.

Yes - retirement is a gateway to freedom! Freedom to plan unhindered; freedom to go where they will, and when they will; freedom to plan and organise their lives. Could I suggest freedom to give service to others, the most satisfying thing in life....

....In these articles I've stressed the necessity for a locomotiveman to become an active member of his "Associated" branch. I've tried to show how it reacts to his lasting benefit quite outwith the improvement he reaps in wages and conditions of service. Here is another angle – so important that it could colour the whole of his future life and its full enjoyment.

For it is a significant fact that since looking more closely at my retired mates, I've failed to find one amongst the "brigade of the miserable" whom I knew as an active trade unionist during his working days. The reason is quite obvious to me – it would also be quite obvious to any reader of the "Journal" if they knew a few of the fellows who write in occasionally.

I know them all, ASLEF officers and others, and not one of them has something which will help them to enjoy their retirement. For instance, John Drayton has his art and his music. Charlie Brooks, who contributes a cycling article now and again, is daft about opera, and knows the highways and byways of Britain better than many geographers."

● Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

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NEW FEATURE
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ARTICLES!



DRIVER CARL TAYLOR – ONLY 40 YEARS OLD

It is with great sadness that I report that Carl Taylor of Bristol Barton Hill Depot passed away on 30 April following a heroic battle with cancer. He was only 40 years of age.

Carl Taylor who left us far too soon

Carl began his railway career in 1984 at Gloucester on the YTS Scheme. He became a Drivers' Assistant in 1986 and was promoted to Driver in December 1988. He was at the time still too young - at 20 years - to take trains out on his own and had to wait a couple of months until he was 21.

Carl left Gloucester in 1988 for Acton to return to driving freight trains. He was at Acton for a couple of years before transferring to Didcot. In September 2002 Carl and his wife Rachel, also a Driver, transferred to Bristol Barton Hill.

Carl was a very popular person where ever he went, as witnessed by the huge turn out at his funeral on 11 May in Gloucester. Both he and his wife Rachel were big Gloucester Rugby Union and Formula One Fans. On their honeymoon they managed to take in the Australian Grand Prix.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out to Carl's wife Rachel, family, friends and work colleagues especially at Bristol, Didcot, Acton and Gloucester Branches.

Carl is already much missed.

Bernard Kennedy – Secretary - Bristol Branch

DAVID SALT – DRIVER AND TRANSPORT PENSIONER

We have been informed that David Salt has been called to 'serve in the top link'. David was born on 12 March 1931 and started work on the railway in Birmingham's Curzon Street offices on 12 February, 1945.

When he was old enough, he joined the footplate at Saltley Depot where he remained, progressing through the ranks to become a Driver. David served on the LDC up to his retirement on the 20 March 1993.

After he retired, David started Tyseley Branch of the the British Transport Pensioners Federation which he chaired until his death. We thank David's wife Brenda, who supplied us with this information, and offer her, and all David's family, friends and comrades our sincere condolences.

Peter Smith – Reporter - RMS



Tinkers all! Left to right: PJ Driver Retired Kings Cross, Dave Weddle Driver Retired Tonbridge, Chris Best former Ex Second Man then Guard, Jon Taylor Signaller, John Fitzgerald Chauffer, Richard (Dick) Brown S&T retired, David Parks S&T.

RAIL MEN MEET AT TINKERS PARK

ASLEF members were well in evidence at a Steam Traction Rally held on 30 and 31 May at Tinkers Park, Hadlow Down near Ukfield in Sussex, attracted by the prospect of one of the largest gatherings of steam driven vehicles in the country. It featured not only steam traction but also vintage cars, buses, lorries and military vehicles. Stalls sold all manner of items, with the money raised going to Cancer Research.

Tinkers Farm used to be a working farm whose farmer was a steam enthusiast. He bought some steam traction engines, and encouraged other like-minded people to use his farm. When he died he willed his farm to a Trust on the understanding that it became and was run as a museum. Today it houses a number of vintage vehicles and the Trust has also installed a 2 foot narrow gauge railway which runs for about a quarter of a mile in a large horseshoe shape with various curves and gradients.

Until last year the only railway locomotives were various diesels plus one battery-powered unit. Last year saw the arrival of an Orenstein and Koppel 0-6-0 well tank steam loco, 'Sao Dimingos'. Originally built in 1928 for a mine in northern Portugal, it was imported into the UK in 1972 and after a number of owners was purchased by the Tinkers Farm Trust. They had it fully restored to full working order. Visitors were given the chance to ride on the train. All the people in the picture are Trust volunteers.

Peter Smith – Reporter – Retired Members Section



The Tilbury branch in July invited Tony West, the Chair of the Retired Members' Section, Alan Taylor of the RMS committee and District 5 Secretary Andy Morrison to its presentations. They were delighted to accept.

Alan Taylor – RMS



At East Ham - Henry Moriarty sitting, back row from the left, Dave Bull, Brian Gill and District Organiser Steve Grant.

EAST HAM'S HONOURED THREE A GREAT farewell, attended by present and retired staff was given on Friday 31 July to three long-serving drivers of East Ham, District Line Branch. Between them they have a total of 103 years service. David Bull alone accounted for 43 of these years. He, along with Brian Gill, a loyal branch stalwart from Barking, and Henry Moriarty who has unfortunately recently retired on medical grounds from Upminster, were each presented with a Certificate of Service Award and a bottle of champagne by their managers.

ASLEF's District Organiser Steve Grant gave each of them an engraved ASLEF tankard bearing the dates that each joined the union. Many thanks to Steve for coming along and joining in wishing all three a happy and enjoyable retirement.

Chris Pirie – IR rep - East Ham branch



All smiles at New Street: left to right - Dave Ince (35yrs), Paul Sharp (45yrs), Dave Calf (EC Member), Martin Bromage-Griffiths (35yrs), Dave Cartwright (35yrs), Steve Braddock (20yrs) and Steve Watts (20 yrs).

BUSINESS THEN BAR AT BIRMINGHAM At the May Birmingham New Street Branch our branch chairman Bill Goode welcomed our EC member Dave Calf to the meeting. After the formalities of branch business had been concluded with the usual jovial and witty banter, Bill invited Dave to address the meeting.

Dave gave us an update on things at 'HQ' and an insight into what other companies were doing to secure jobs for our brothers at Deutch Bahann whose jobs were being threatened during the current financial meltdown. In fact our own company London Midland was starting former members of Deutch Bahann at New Street and Show Hill.

After his well informed address Dave presented six of our members with service badges totalling 190 years of service to our union. The meeting then adjourned to the bar for a more jovial banter!

Martin Bromage-Griffiths Reporter – Birmingham New Street

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION

There will be a Severn Tunnel Junction Reunion on Saturday 17 October at the Non Pol Club Rogiet from six until late. For further details contact Tony Rake at Newport LLC.

BRIGHTON FRINGE MEETING

ASLEF is holding a fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party Conference. It will be held from 1630 until 1730 on Sunday 27 September in Arundel 1, at the Holiday Inn, Brighton on the subject of 'Reclaim the Track: Towards a Progressive Rail Policy'. Speakers will include Lord Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, Keith Norman, General Secretary ASLEF, Gerry Doherty, General Secretary TSSA, Bob Rixham, National Officer for Rail, UNITE – and hopefully, you.

LIVERPOOL STREET REUNION

The Liverpool Street Welfare & Social Club is hosting its Annual Reunion on Saturday 26 September from 1300 at the Railway Tavern Hotel, Angel Lane, Stratford.

All former and current members of the Club are welcome, as are those former and current colleagues from the Liverpool Street Train crew and ex-Loco Supervisory grades, and all who have a friendship and association with the Liverpool Street Club.

A small buffet will be provided, and we hope to see you there. If you have any queries please contact John Thorpe, Secretary LSW&SC (01621) 851110.

LIVERPOOL OPEN MEETING

The union is organising a fringe meeting at the TUC Conference in Liverpool on the subject of 'Mail and Rail – the Competition Myth'. This will take place from 1600 – 1730 on Sunday 13 September in the Britannia Pavilion at Liverpool's Express Holiday Inn. Not only will we have speakers including Louise Ellman, chair, Transport Select Committee, Keith Norman, General Secretary ASLEF Chair Transport Select Committee, Billy Hayes, General Secretary CWU, and Mark Dowd, Chair of Merseytravel – there will also be free refreshments!

ASLEF NATIONAL WEEKEND FORUM

The ASLEF National Weekend Forum which is open to all members to discuss the political industrial and organisational direction of ASLEF takes place in Birmingham, 28-29 November. To book your place please email: sarah.laurie@aslef.org.uk

FAREWELL TO OZ-BOUND JOHN LILLIE

John Lillie was given a leaving-do and send-off in March after deciding to leave the industry and emigrate to Western Australia.

The event at the Wheatsheaf in Wetheral was well-attended as members of the depot staff and local community gathered to wish John, previously of Tyne Yard, Thornaby, Crewe and latterly Carlisle Heavy Haul, all the best of luck in the future.

John was a popular driver at Carlisle and a firm supporter of the union. He decided to emigrate to the other side of the world to give his children a better life (even if he is still driving trains out there), saying he believed they had more opportunity there than staying in the UK.

He will be sorely missed, but says he will keep in touch with his colleagues at Carlisle. We all wish you luck, John.

Rod Bryant – Reporter – Carlisle Branch



In Steve Grant's words, the branch is enthusiastic, determined and capable

CROYDON TRAMS REACH 100

ON THE 26 July, Croydon Tram/Light Rail No1 celebrated its 100th meeting - another milestone in our branch's history. It was in August of 2000 that a colleague invited a group of tram drivers to a meeting with some committee members from West Brompton Branch. This led directly to a depot sub-branch being formed in Croydon.

Membership grew rapidly and on Sunday 25 February 2001 we were pleased to welcome District Organiser Steve Grant to our depot meeting. In Steve's address he said how impressed he was with our enthusiasm, determination and capability and that he would have no hesitation in recommending to the Executive Committee that we formed our own branch within No 8 District.

Our branch grew in strength, even in the face of constant opposition from the incumbent union and our employers. With the continuing support of Steve Grant, Terry Wilkinson, Dave Feldwick and so very many other ASLEF colleagues - you all know who you are! - and the commitment of our founder members, we have become the successful branch we are today.

Last May we achieved the breakthrough we had been striving for, recognition with our employers for pay and conditions negotiations. This was achieved by the fantastic support of our colleagues at First Scotrail and their District Organiser Kevin Lindsay. The union's 2009 AAD was the first to see a delegate from a tram/light rail branch attending conference, and he was able to express our thanks to the assembly for all the support we have received. It has culminated in our 100th meeting as a strong and professional union branch.

Patrick Todd - Branch Reporter



Protect new drivers, urge retired colleagues

RMS AT NINE ELMS The Secretary of the RMS, Tony West, and the section's Treasurer, Alan Taylor, visited a recent Waterloo Nine Elms branch meeting. Tony gave a report on the RMS activities highlighting the many challenges that pensioners face and the amount of final salary schemes that are disappearing. He insisted that as a union we must protect our own schemes at all costs, saying that it was paramount that we protect new and existing entrants in final salary schemes, so as not to allow another benefit to be excluded to new drivers.

Following Tony's report he made a presentation of a 45 year badge to recently retired driver Dave 'Lord Lucan' Bryant. His Lordship had worked for a total of 47 years on the railway.

The branch also extended a warm vote of thanks to Marz Colombini who has had to resign his position as Waterloo Branch Secretary as he takes up his new position on the union's national executive.

Mark Prenter - Acting Branch Secretary

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FRAIL REST POINT

WELL done to Bro Czerniakiewicz, for coming up with yet another frail excuse in the argument over rest day working.

Is this brother aware of the criteria the executive committee adopts (or is supposed to adopt) before granting each company a rest day working agreement? It is supposed to be for the recruitment of new drivers, to cover route learning and for training purposes. As I said in a previous letter to the Journal, companies have abused the system and continue to do so because we are allowing them to. It's blinkered to think otherwise.

As for the argument of being able to get your annual leave granted, this is because your company does not carry the correct establishment to allow this to happen. I'd like to ask how many of your colleagues in the past haven't taken their full annual leave entitlement (something that ASLEF has fought for over the years) - and have taken some other form of payment instead?

If you and your colleagues stuck to your guns, the company you work for would think twice before declining annual leave. A company I used to work for had a rude awakening when an abundance of their drivers insisted on taking outstanding annual leave in the last two weeks of December. The company policy was that annual leave not taken before 31 December was lost. The company frantically begged for leniency and we didn't have the same problem again.

Bro Czerniakiewicz also raised the questions of pensions and staff travel. If he bothered to turn up to his branch meetings he'd find our ASLEF reps have constantly campaigned for these things. Without their outstanding efforts, we'd all be far worse off than we are - and still no doubt working our rest days.

I wonder if Bro Czerniakiewicz's attitude might change if it was his job on the line? Wake up and smell the coffee, brother - and don't let your company dupe you into believing they're doing you a favour by allowing you to work your rest days. It's the other way round.

Finally I'd like to say how dismayed I am to see our executive committee still granting rest day working to companies who are making drivers redundant and who are also reducing drivers' hours. Surely this is lunacy! How can these companies argue that they haven't got enough work to go around - but at the same time they need drivers to work their free time to cover work? Could someone at national level explain how this can be?

Daren Morgan



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

ONE UP FOR PIGGOTT

I WOULD like to write and publicly thank my local branch secretary Dave Piggott for his never ending help and all the kind branches that supported my London to Paris cycle ride with much needed and generous donations for the Anthony Nolan Trust.

The ride was a fantastic experience over 3 days with about 16.22 hours cycling (using 17,600 calories) over the 3 day period.

I was lucky enough to be an unrelated bone marrow donor some years back so am fully aware how much money the charity needs in its efforts to fight Leukaemia, with even basic blood tests to place new people on the register costing so much.

With a total due to rise to over £2,000, of which over £400 came from Branch donations, to get so much support and well wishes in

GET TOUGH ON CONDITIONS



WITH regard to the leading article in last month's Journal, thank God that Keith Norman has highlighted the issue of how drivers are affected by their cab environment and then put through Management for Attendance (MFA).

For my part, I fell on to my left elbow because of a loose stair trim at Marylebone. This went on to cause tennis elbow which was aggravated by stiff PBCs on some 165 and 168 stock. I was then threatened with the sack by a former train driver at the resulting MFA hearing as I had reported sick whilst on leave – something I did as my leave had been ruined.

Also previously I had had the cheek to suffer sciatica which I'm sure was caused by collapsed, worn out, and loose drivers seats that rock from side to side. It's not helped when you step out of the cab and trip over rubbish that track workers have left behind. And this isn't to mention the bugs that you pick up because filth is constantly blasted onto your head from the forced ventilation system that you can't turn off as it passes through filthy black filters which have been long due for replacement!

I had no points until I was pressured into driving when ill by this damned MFA and missed a station!

I love driving trains, but in seven years I have had more aggravation from managers and worse health than I had in twenty-five as an Oxford Bus driver, even though there I had to deal with drunks with knives and broken bottles, mad cyclists, and some elements of Blackbird Leys! The managers were not the enemy then, they supported you, even in privatisation!

It's about time we got tough. I think rest day working is sanctioned all too easily. One day there will be a big smash and a sick driver will carry the can, whether or not he survives. We and our passengers are more important than targets, cost, and shareholders.

Driver Terry Tuite - Banbury Ends

this time of economic gloom and doom was really heart-warming. So many thanks to everyone who supported me so generously.

Mick Harding - Driver
Instructor - Southeastern High Speed

LABOURING ON FOR VICTORY

I GRATEFULLY refer to your acknowledgement (July edition) to the success we had in winning the

Bishopbriggs South council by election, East Dunbartonshire Council.

I'd like to place on record my sincere appreciation to ASLEF and to all colleagues who helped to secure this important win for the Scottish Labour Party.

We also won two local council seats in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire and returned two MEPs, David Martin and Catherine Stihler, despite one of the biggest political scandals ever to hit

British politics. It contrasts with the living nightmare we all have to share with the election of two fascists representing the UK in Europe.

No one should mistake the real anger towards Westminster politicians from all political parties. Within Labour we might not have been surprised to hear about the Tory grandees' moats and duck houses, but we are furious with the minority of our own MPs who have let their own people down. In the process they have also cost many first rate local Labour councillors their seats.

Voter apathy caused the election of the BNP MEPs because large numbers of voters, sickened by all politicians, simply stayed at home. Politics needs to re-establish its moral authority. We need real reform of Westminster but also have to be careful to avoid the old days where only the silver spoon brigade could afford to be representatives.

We only have a year before the next General Election and Labour needs to reaffirm itself

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as the only party that will tackle inequality and injustice and will champion opportunity for all and not just the few.

Driver and Councillor Alan Moir - Scottish Labour Party Group, East Dunbartonshire Council.

ANOTHER SIDE

I WOULD just like to point out to fellow members that the letter submitted from a John Williams which was printed in last month's Journal may not be all it seems. This is a vindictive, sniping letter aimed at his former colleagues at Birmingham New Street and may be from the John Williams who first of all let us down by working during the flexible rostering strike and then again later when he set up a website and then aimed attacks on various people from this portal! This is what happens when members who break the rules of the Union are allowed to remain in the union - and then abuse our hospitality!

Lastly, believe me, he wouldn't be made welcome at any Drivers reunion I know of!

Karl Maguire - Birmingham New Street

HANDS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

DON PULLEN, our late Assistant General Secretary, once commented that quite often we hide our light under a bushel.

A case in point was our Wembley Park Branch and its branch secretary, Steve Connolly, sending condolences via the Amalgamated Transit Union, to the family of Jeanice McMillan who died at the controls of her train in the recent subway train crash in Washington, USA.

The ATU took time to send a warm message of thanks to the branch which I am sure we all greatly appreciate. The American union also commented they were waiting for the report on the cause of the crash, something I think we all would like to see in

KIND OFFER OF COPPER PRINTS

I HAVE two prints that were given by ASLEF locomen to my father, Charlie Kidd, when he retired. I want them to have an appreciative home and I'd happily donate them so long as whoever takes them gives a donation to an ASLEF charity.

My late father Charlie Kidd was the branch secretary of ASLEF at Stafford from 1951 to 1981 and when Stafford closed he moved to Crewe Depot. When he left the other members at Stafford presented him with a copper print of the LMS Loco 'Grenadier Guardsman' which has the ASLEF logo on it and is signed by his mates at Stafford shed. He also had a copper print of the Great Western Loco 'Clun Castle' with the ASLEF logo on it. They are 16 3/4" x 13 1/2".

I can be contacted at antony.kidd@ntlworld.com or kiddpdaj@hotmail.com or by phone on 01785 605308.

Tony Kidd - Stafford



Looking for a good home



case there are lessons to be learnt on LUL.

Mike Beck - Jubilee East Branch.

OUTSTANDING ASLEF

I AM a train operator on London Underground's Jubilee line based at Wembley Park depot. I'm currently on medical leave, recovering from surgery I underwent three months ago. My consultant has advised that I need six to eight weeks rest before I resume work on alternative duties.

I am writing to bring to your kind attention the excellent way that my local reps - Mr Steve Connoley and Ms Maria McFarlane - have dealt with my case. Maria accompanied the DMT for a home visit, making sure I was at ease while the DMT carried out his responsibilities. Steve has been outstanding all the way. He has showed a thoroughly professional approach with his concern for my long-term well-being, as he protected my interests and rights and created a right balance with the management. Thank you, Steve, Maria and ASLEF for all your joint efforts for delivering a well planned and organised service. I'm sure I made the right choice when I joined. I've thanked them personally, but I wanted others to know my gratitude for their excellent efforts.

Shashi Kher - Operator - Jubilee Line

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ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551

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LIMITED RAMSGATE ASLEF BADGE is now available in a limited edition of 100 individually numbered badges struck to commemorate the restoration and re-naming of ex Ramsgate loco Manston. They are £5.00 each with first class recorded delivery at £1.50. For further details either email asleframsgate@hotmail.co.uk or phone Ramsgate branch secretary Dave Bull on 07941142163

ASLEF NOTTINGHAM BRANCH 125 YEAR CELEBRATION TIES (1883 - 2008). Blue with Robin Hood motif. Few remaining. £10 including p and p. Cheques payable to Nottingham Locomen's Welfare Fund. Contact Branch Sec A. Jones, 23 Matlock Ave, Mansfield, Notts NG18 5DW.

NEIL YOUNG: A MAN NEEDS A TRAIN

ROCK STARS are just like you and me. Actually they're not at all, But they do share one thing with the common folk: when they're not working they have hobbies.

Admittedly their hobbies tend to be of the more exotic variety - collecting fast cars, for instance, not matchbox labels. And when a rock star tells you he likes playing with models and glue guns you can be certain there's not a lot of balsa wood involved. There are exceptions, however. Like Neil Young: Canadian rock superstar, solo artist, member of Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, headliner of this summer's Isle Of Wight festival... and model railway enthusiast.

Such a train nut is Neil that, if you walk into the office of his L.A record company, the first thing you'll see is a huge Lionel train set. If you walk around the grounds of his ranch near San Francisco, you'll see a barn - the 'Train Barn', so-named as not to confuse it with the 'Studio Barn' where he made his famous album "Harvest" - which houses an even more enormous train set, a Lionel Great Northern F3 A-B-A, running along 230 metres of track.

Did you ever see that TV ad with the bloke is so smitten with a certain brand of razor he bought the company? That's how much Neil loves Lionel trains. When the Michigan-based firm, which was founded in 1900, filed for bankruptcy in 2004, Neil stepped in and bought a big stake, putting the compay

and its trains back on the rails.

When he's not coupling mini cars to mini engines or modelling a mini hanging basket for mini Mr Stationmaster's mini house, you'll find him inventing something or other model railway related. For example, once while on the road - yes, he had a train set on his tour bus - he spent his hours offstage designing a lifelike electronic moo for the model cows dotting the landscape his trains runs through. Neil makes the scenery himself too, using organic materials where possible - presumably to counteract the toxic footprint left by the antique model figures made of lead. A family outing for the Youngs involves scouring his land for rocks, moss and pine cones to make the hills and trees. He's even devised a special misting system to stop them shrivelling up.

It's no secret, as the popularity of the Guitar Hero game shows, that there are drivers fantasies of being rock stars. But rock stars obsessed with working on trains are a mite rarer. Yes, the old blues and country artists would always sing about trains - Johnny Cash made a whole album of train songs - but generally if a rock star sings about any form of transport, it's 99% certain to be a car. In fact Neil Young's newest album "Fork In The Road" is all about cars. Trains are reserved for his private life.

So where did this locomophilia come from? Whatever weird thing turns you on can usually be blamed on your parents, but let's not get into that. It should be noted, though, that Neil's dad bought him his first train set when he was five years old - a Marx Santa Fe diesel. Neil

had lusted over the more expensive Lionels, which the family couldn't afford, but he loved his little train. For a while his dad played with him, but eventually lost interest. Lost interest in the marriage too, since he left Neil's mum. So here we have Neil, sleeping with the train set by his bed, playing by himself now, but still remembering with a warm glow, the evocative smell and vibration of the old AC motor. Looks like we've got that one diagnosed then.

As the years rolled by, Neil acquired his first Lionel locomotive and then his first guitar, followed by his first high school band, which rehearsed in the basement of his Toronto home, Canada home where the growing train set now lived. But even after the regular electric shocks from his train set when the basement flooded, and even after Neil left with band for California and joined an even bigger band and became a rock star, he never gave up on his first love. As the money started pouring in, instead of doing what any self-respecting rock star would do and spend it on cocaine and girls, he bought more Lionels, rare, vintage models, enough to fill a 2,800 square foot barn.

It all came to a head after the birth of his second son, Ben. Neil, unlike his own father, wanted some quality train-playing with his son. But Ben was born with severe cerebral palsy, leaving him with extremely limited muscle control and motor

skills. Since he could neither talk nor operate switches, Neil, undaunted, started working on designing a special, wireless remote control that Ben could use by leaning on it. It worked. On any given day you might find Neil standing at one end of the barn, calling out orders and Ben slowing the train down or speeding it up, blowing its whistle and learning to operate the extras his dad keeps coming up with. (Check it out at www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UENULIH0Ks).

Extras like the built-in sound system that accurately reproduced the sound of specific locomotives. Or a built-in camera allowing you to watch the engine roar down the track from the driver's eye view. Neil's ideas were getting so elaborate and costly that he decided he needed help. So he went into partnership with Lionel's owner, starting up a new development company called Liontech.

One of Neil's aims is to lure kids away from their computer and get them playing with model trains. Nevertheless, he's often to be found on the www.coilcouplers.com website, run by a model railway nut named Clyde Cole. Clyde shares technical tips, makes videos (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8Yu4_bhH6o) and reviews all the latest Lionel stuff. Clyde, we'll let you in on a secret, is an alias for Neil Young.

Sylvie Simmons

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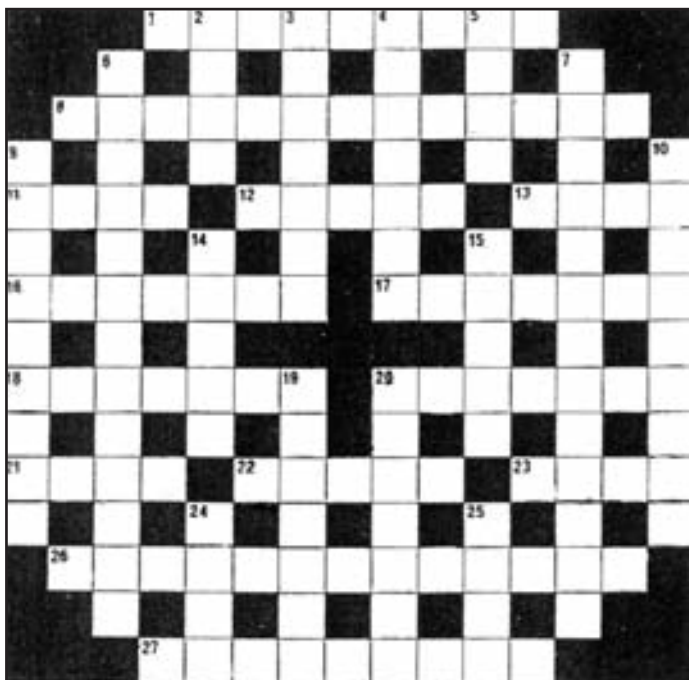
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ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 41

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 40 which appeared in the August edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **George Watts** from **Billericay, Essex**.

ACROSS 1 Bakerloo Line 7 Strap 8 Senator 11 Chisels 12 Tooting 13 Angus 14 Easy Rider 16 Dismissal 19 Capri 21 Osmonds 23 Compere 24 Reactor 25 Inapt 26 Parsons Green
DOWN 1 Busking 2 Kernels 3 Repossess 4 Onset 5 Langour 6 Coach and Four 9 Third 10 Roger Livesey 15 Selecting 17 Samba 18 Ignites 19 Comrade 20 Preston 22 Siren

Thanks for all your responses to the 40th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 A flat piece of metal used to connect adjacent rails in a track (4-5)
- 8 Period from May to September when many people go away (7,6)
- 11 German Industrial region (4)
- 12 Goodbye in Spanish (5)
- 13 ---- Duckworth, much loved Coronation St. actress (4)
- 16 Resting place for a ship (7)
- 17 Method of publishing using a computer (4-3)
- 18 Crisp dress material (7)
- 20 Site of famous Cistercian Abbey in Wales (7)
- 21 Master cook (4)
- 22 First or second class postage? (5)
- 23 A long way off (4)
- 26 Railway enthusiasts with notebook and pen (5,8)
- 27 Schedule of arrival and departure of trains (4-5)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Blue flower (4)
- 3 One who saves large amounts of food, goods etc. for a rainy day (7)
- 4 Captured by a cowboy with a rope (7)
- 5 Eleven players and a Manager (4)
- 6 Iridescent material also known as 'Nacre' found inside some seashells (6,2,5)
- 7 Star of 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid' (6,7)
- 9 Designer of houses, etc. (9)
- 10 Working with wood (9)
- 14 Sing so that the voice varies from normal to a falsetto, heard in Switzerland (5)
- 15 Taking advantage of the facilities (5)
- 19 Performer, singer etc. (7)
- 20 Tickets drawn from a revolving drum to win a prize (7)
- 24 Popular small car (4)
- 25 Short Take Off and Landing – in brief! (4)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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